

# THE MILITANT

**HAVANA BOOK FAIR:**  
**'History of class struggle in US**  
**vital for revolutionaries worldwide'**  
 — PAGE 9

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 78/NO. 12 MARCH 31, 2014

## Paper brings working-class politics to new readers

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Supporters of the *Militant* are selling subscriptions to the socialist press along with books on revolutionary politics as they talk with working people about developments in the class struggle worldwide and the road forward in face of a deepening crisis of capitalism. At the center of these efforts, socialist workers are encouraging others to join the campaign to free the Cuban Five and support toilers of Ukraine demanding Russian troops out of their country.

Socialist workers Dave Ferguson and Susan LaMont from Atlanta visited workers on the picket line at Kellogg Company's cereal plant in Memphis, Tenn., March 14-15. The 220 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 252G have been locked out since Oct. 22. Ferguson and LaMont also attended the March 15 "Unity in the Community" support meeting for the workers.

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## Truck drivers in Canada shut down major port

BY DAN GRANT  
AND STEVE PENNER

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — A strike here by some 1,600 union and nonunion truckers has brought "Canada's largest port" to "its knees," said British Columbia Transportation Minister Todd Stone, who called on the federal government to intervene.

Truckers at Port Metro Vancouver, which ships more than \$170 billion worth of goods each year, are fighting for higher wages and against long hours and unpaid time waiting to pick up or unload containers.

On Feb. 26 about 1,200 nonunion truckers, part of the United Truckers Association, a nonprofit organization, went on strike. They were joined March 10 by 400 unionized truckers, organized by Unifor-Vancouver Container Truckers' Association.

Angry at waiting times that can run up to four hours or longer to offload containers at Port Metro Vancouver docks, the 400 unionized drivers

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## Working people at center of fight for Ukraine sovereignty

Militant's on-the-scene report from Kiev



Militant photos: Above, John Studer; Inset, Dag Tirsén  
**Above,** Trade union headquarters at Maidan burned out by police during February actions. Unions opened it for organization of self-defense forces, hospital services and food distribution. Circles of red paint on building each symbolize someone killed in fight to oust government of President Viktor Yanukovich. At right is tent for protesters from Donetsk region. **Inset,** Inside Donetsk tent. From left, Demitri Antoliavych, miner Sasha Antoliavych and Oksana Demynovych, part of *Militant* reporting team.

BY JOHN STUDER

KIEV, Ukraine — "We are among the workers who have come to Maidan recently," said Sasha Antoliavych, a former miner from the Donetsk region bordering Russia in eastern Ukraine March 17, the day after Moscow stepped up its moves to annex the Crimea following a sham referendum. "We plan to stay here to help organize to defend our country from Russia."

Antoliavych is one of thousands from across Ukraine who remain encamped in the Maidan — Independence Square — after overthrowing

the pro-Moscow government of President Victor Yanukovich.

"While we watch Russia," Antoliavych said, "we also watch the politi-

**MOSCOW SEIZES CRIMEA**  
**AFTER SHAM REFERENDUM**  
 — See article on page 10

cians of the new government. Most of them are not much different from those who fled."

A team of *Militant* correspondents  
 Continued on page 10

## London event brings together forces fighting to free Cuban 5



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

International Commission of Inquiry into the Case of the Cuban Five in London presented comprehensive summary of frame-up of Five and international fight for their freedom. From left, Irma González, daughter of René González, one of Five; author Alice Walker; Diana Holland, assistant general secretary of UNITE union; Mirta Rodríguez, mother of Antonio Guerrero, one of Five; and Kenia Serrano, president of Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples.

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

LONDON — An International Commission of Inquiry into the Case of the Cuban Five drew more than 250 Cuba solidarity activists, trade unionists and others from 27 countries to London's Law Society March 7-8. Organized by the international coalition Voices for the Five and hosted by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, the commission brought together legal professionals, family members and others at the forefront of the 15-year defense effort. Among the participants from

Cuba was former National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón.

Arrested in 1998, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González, known as the Cuban Five, are Cuban revolutionaries who were jailed in the U.S. on trumped-up charges that ranged from failure to register as foreign agents to conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information and, in the case of Gerardo Hernández, conspiracy

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## Turkey: Death of 15-year-old sparks new round of protests

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Anti-government demonstrations have erupted again in Turkey. They are the largest since a week of rallies and other actions swept the country last summer demanding the resigna-

tion of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The most recent protests were sparked March 11 by the death of 15-year-old Berkin Elvan, who had

Continued on page 5

## Capitalist neglect in NYC kills 8, injures dozens

BY EMMA JOHNSON

NEW YORK — Capitalism in decline breeds apathy toward public infrastructure and magnifies the rulers' disregard for the lives of working people. This was brought home March 12 in the working-class neighborhood of East Harlem when a leak in a gas

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- Russian Revolution fought old attitudes toward women 6
- Quebec gov't probe targets construction workers union 7
- GM bosses' refusal to fix known defects kills 100s 8



# Melba Hernández: Combatant and leader of Cuban Revolution

BY SETH GALINSKY

From the very beginning the Cuban Revolution has had more leaders who are women than any other socialist revolution. Melba Hernández, one of those women, died March 9 at the age of 92. She was among the initial leaders of the movement led by Fidel Castro that brought workers and farmers to power in Cuba and one of two women who took part in the July 26, 1953, assault on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago.

That action, while failing in its immediate objective, was a decisive turning point and clarion call to revolutionary struggle against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

Hernández was a founding member of the July 26 Movement led by Castro and a combatant in the 1956-58 revolutionary war, which culminated in a popular insurrection that overthrew the Batista tyranny on Jan. 1, 1959. She was a founding member of the Communist Party of Cuba in 1965 and a member of its Central Committee from 1986 until her death. She took on various diplomatic and other responsibilities in the workers and farmers government that replaced capitalist rule.

Hernández was born July 28, 1921. Her parents had been underground fighters against Spanish rule during the war of 1895. In 1943 she graduated with a law degree from the University of Havana. “It wasn’t a ‘profitable’ career for me,” she said in an interview reprinted in *Juventud Rebelde*. “My ‘clients’ were exploited peasants, a girl who went from the brothel to jail, fired workers.” In 1951 she joined the Orthodox Party, after its

leader Eduardo Chibás committed suicide to protest government corruption.

After Batista seized power in a coup in 1952, Hernández went to a demonstration at the grave of Carlos Rodríguez, a worker killed by Batista’s thugs, where she first met Abel Santamaría. He introduced her to Fidel Castro in May that year.

Before long Hernández and Haydée Santamaría, Abel’s sister, were taking on major responsibilities in the revolutionary movement headed by Castro. “We were the people of confidence for the most sensitive, most dangerous tasks,” Hernández said in a 2003 interview by Susana Lee published in Cuba’s *Granma* newspaper.

The two women pressed to be among the 160 combatants in the July 26, 1953, assaults on the Moncada barracks in Santiago and garrison in Bayamo. Castro approved and backed their request. “I protested to Fidel that we were as revolutionary as anyone there and that it was unjust to discriminate against us for being women,” she recalled in an interview published in *Granma* in 1998.

The bold assault failed to take the garrisons or spark a mass rebellion against the tyranny. Five revolutionaries died in the attack; 56 were tortured and murdered after capture, including Abel Santamaría. Haydée Santamaría and Hernández were among those who were tortured but not killed.

Castro and 27 other combatants were tried and sentenced to up to 15 years in prison. Santamaría and Hernández were sentenced to 17 months.

After Santamaría and Hernández



CubaDebate/Constantino Arias



Federation of Cuban Women

Above, Melba Hernández, left, and Haydée Santamaría leaving prison, Feb. 20, 1954. Both served time after July 26, 1953, assault on Moncada barracks. Inset, Hernández, left, with Nguyen Thi Dinh, deputy commander during Vietnam War of Southern Liberation Armed Forces, and Vilma Espín, in Havana, 1974. Hernández headed Cuban Committee in Solidarity with Vietnam during Vietnam War.

were released, Castro assigned them to organize the provisional leadership of the movement. They edited and organized distribution of tens of thousands of copies of Castro’s speech to the court, “History Will Absolve Me,” which became the program of the revolutionary movement and organizing tool in the campaign to free the revolutionaries.

In face of growing support for their release, Castro and others were freed on May 15, 1955. When Castro founded the July 26 Movement in June that year, Hernández became a member of its National Directorate.

After Castro’s release, Hernández was among those who joined him in Mexico to prepare for a revolutionary war against the Batista dictatorship. Castro and 81 men sailed for Cuba on the *Granma* yacht in November 1956. After the *Granma* landed and Castro began putting together the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra mountains of eastern Cuba, Hernández returned to Cuba where she rejoined the urban underground of the July 26 Movement, which organized to support the guerrillas and other activities. When it was no longer possible for her to remain in the cities, she became a Rebel Army combatant in the Third Eastern Front, under the command of Juan Almeida.

Castro led the battle for women’s equal participation in all aspects of the revolutionary struggle, and more than

a few were clamoring to fight arms in hand. In October 1957 he appointed Celia Sánchez, the first woman combatant in the Rebel Army, to its general command. In September 1958, Castro convinced the Rebel Army command to set up the all-woman Mariana Grajales platoon, trained under his direction.

“How can we give rifles to women when there are so many men who are unarmed?” asked some of the men. “Because they are better soldiers that you are,” replied Castro. “They’re more disciplined.”

Hernández headed the Cuban Committee in Solidarity with Vietnam during the U.S. war against Vietnam in the 1960s and ’70s. In the 1980s she was Cuba’s ambassador to Vietnam and Cambodia. She also served as secretary general of the Organization in Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America; vice president of the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal of Our America; and director of the Communist Party’s Center for Asian Studies. She was a deputy in Cuba’s National Assembly from 1976 to 1986 and elected again in 1993.

“In spite of the apparent failure [of the Moncada] assault because of the fallen comrades, going to prison, we never saw it like that, but as a victory that showed the road forward,” Hernández told *Granma* in 2003. “Without Moncada we wouldn’t have what we have today. ... I don’t regret it.”

# THE MILITANT

## Stewardship of nature also falls to working class

**Backward ‘environmental’ policies in the U.K. blocked farmers from dredging rivers, leading to floods that devastated farmers, land and infrastructure, as well as wildlife habitats. The ‘Militant’ points to the inseparable working-class battles to defend land and labor.**



Reuters/Kieran Doherty  
Man ferries local resident in Datchet village during flood in southern England, Feb. 12.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.



# Sales of ‘Militant,’ books

Continued from front page

Local 252G member Marvin Rush bought *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs. He first saw the book when Ferguson and LaMont met him on the picket line in December and was struck by how the Minneapolis Teamsters in the 1930s won unemployed workers to the union cause.

“It’s important to know your history,” he said. “What the Teamsters did is a powerful example for today, because the employers use the same old dirty tricks, trying to pit the unemployed against the unions. Instead, it was brothers and sisters standing together.”

In addition to *Teamster Rebellion*, Rush got a *Militant* subscription and *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free*, one of 11 books on special offer with a subscription (see ad below).

Two other Local 252G members signed up to get the paper and two workers who subscribed last fall decided to renew. Nine others bought single copies.

*Militant* supporters from Seattle attended a March 15 rally outside the detention center in Tacoma, Wash., where some 250 people demonstrated to back immigrant detainees on hunger strike against being deported.

“It looks like that paper is covering issues that others don’t,” said Thomas Kaplan, 20, a student at Western Washington State University in Bellingham, who signed up for an introductory subscription. “I don’t want to just interpret things, I’m interested in being in the middle of activism.” Kaplan came to the

detention center with farmworkers from Skagit Valley, north of Seattle.

From Auckland, New Zealand, Patrick Brown reported that cabinetmaker Steve Hayman renewed his subscription when Baskaran Appu and Felicity Cogan called at his workshop March 11.

“The *Militant* provides something I don’t get through other media,” he said. “I particularly appreciate finding out about the conditions of the working class in the United States, people there standing up and aware of what’s going on.”

Hayman also bought a copy of *Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five*.

“We visited subscriber Ian Dobson, a retired electrical worker, on March 15,” Brown wrote. “He told us he likes ‘reading views in the paper — for example, Ukraine, although I’m on the other side on that one.’ When we asked him for his views, he asked what right Ukraine had to break with Russia, when it had historically always been part of it. We explained that Ukraine has a long independent history. He listened with interest, but finished up with, ‘I’m with Putin on this one.’”

Dobson decided to renew his subscription for a year.

Jacque Henderson in Omaha, Neb., reported that along with Ruth Robinett she visited a local Ukrainian church March 16 to talk with people about the *Militant’s* call for defense of Ukraine sovereignty, Russian troops out, and to invite people to a *Militant* Labor Forum on this topic March 22.

“Our whole history, from the time of the czars, is a history of our land being taken, our culture and our language be-



Militant/John Naubert

“Looks like a paper covering issues others don’t,” says Thomas Kaplan, right, signing up for subscription from Dennis Richter at March 15 protest outside detention center in Tacoma, Wash.

ing denied,” Olesia Reichowskys told them as she signed up for an introductory subscription. “Stalin came in and did the same thing the czars had done for centuries. I learned Ukrainian from my grandparents, my parents spoke Russian, the language of work as Stalin forced them into the collectivized land projects.”

“We have a saying,” Reichowskys said. “‘The Ukraine is easy to conquer, but impossible to rule.’ I am happy your paper is printing the facts of our struggle so that people in this country can read them. I haven’t seen a socialist news-weekly before but I’m interested to take a look at it.”

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## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### NEBRASKA

**Omaha**  
**Russian Troops Out Now! Defend Ukraine Sovereignty!** Speaker: David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 22, 7:30 p.m.

**In Defense of Land and Labor: The Keystone XL Pipeline and ‘Fracking’ Debate.** Speaker: Rebecca Williamson, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 29, 7:30 p.m. Both events at 3302 Q St., Upstairs. Tel.: (402) 871-0735.

### TEXAS

**Houston**  
**What’s Behind Downsizing of U.S. Military?** Speaker: Mike Fitzsimmons, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 28, 7:30 p.m. 4800 W. 34th St., Suite C50L. Donation: \$5. Tel.: (713) 476-7033.

### WASHINGTON

**Seattle**  
**The Fight to End Women’s Oppression Is Key to Workers’ Struggle for Power.** Speaker: Cecelia Moriarity, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 28, 7:30 p.m. 5418 Rainier Ave. S. Tel.: (206) 323-1755.

### CANADA

**Montreal**  
**The Capitalist Crisis in West Africa and the Revolutionary Legacy of Thomas Sankara.** Speaker: Michel Prairie, participant in Pathfinder team in West Africa. Fri., March 28, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis, Room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-3076.

### NEW ZEALAND

**Auckland**  
**Where Should Workers Stand in Debate on TPPA Trade Agreement?** Speaker: Annalucia Vermunt, Communist League. Fri., March 28, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5 waged, \$2 unwaged. 188a Onehunga Mall. Tel.: (09) 369-1223.

## Special offers with ‘Militant’ subscription



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### Women in Cuba

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by Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, Yolanda Ferrer  
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### Women and Revolution

The Living Example of the Cuban Revolution  
by Asela de los Santos, Mary-Alice Waters and others  
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### Los cosméticos, las modas, y la explotación de la mujer

(Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women)  
by Joseph Hansen, Evelyn Reed, Mary-Alice Waters  
\$10 with subscription (regular \$15)

See distributors  
on page 6



### The Cuban Five

Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free  
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# Commission on Cuban 5

**Continued from front page**

to commit murder. The Five were in fact carrying out a mission from the Cuban government to monitor rightist paramilitary groups based in Florida.

The commission was presided over by Yogesh Sabharwal, former chief justice of India; Zac Yacoob, former justice of the constitutional court of South Africa; and Philippe Texier, former judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals in France.

The first day concentrated on hearing details and accounts about the scale of bombings, assaults and deadly provocations directed against the Cuban Revolution over decades by armed groups based in the U.S. and the Cuban Five's efforts to prevent further attacks.

Day two focused on the treatment of the Five by the U.S. government, focusing on their arrest, the conduct of the trials, conditions of detention and visiting rights. The conclusions of the commission will be issued shortly.

The format provided an opportunity for the Five and their defenders to present a comprehensive summary of the case and the international fight for their freedom. The strength, dignity and in-

tegrity of the men and their families, who remain unbroken despite the best efforts of the U.S. rulers, shone through the entire event. Despite the trappings of a quasi-legal proceeding, the sessions were marked above all by a spirit of solidarity.

Four days before the commission opened, the British government denied René González a visa to enter the country, citing his status as a convicted felon who had been imprisoned for more than four years. Due to speak publicly outside Cuba for the first time since his release from U.S. custody last May, González appeared before the commission via Skype instead.

Lorenzo Gonzalo, deputy director of Radio Miami, who had himself been deeply involved in counterrevolutionary activity in Cuba and Miami for many years, detailed the U.S. government's training of mercenaries for the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs and subsequent backing of rightist paramilitary groups. Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, attacks by these forces have killed 3,478 and left 2,099 permanently disabled. Relatives of three of those killed described the circumstances.

Lt. Col. Roberto Hernández of Cuba's Ministry of the Interior helped investigate a surge of bombings in Cuban tourist areas in the 1990s, the period the Five were in Miami. He summarized 12 actual and planned attacks, showing photos of defused bombs and the destruction caused by explosions. "This is why we still need men like the Cuban Five to defend our people," he said.

Gerardo Hernández is serving one life term for conspiracy to commit espionage and another concurrent life sentence for conspiracy to commit murder. Life terms for Labañino and Guerrero for espionage conspiracy were later reduced to 30 years and 21 years 10 months respectively.

In the U.S. legal code, there is no such crime as "spying," Philip Horowitz, the Miami attorney who represented René González throughout his 15 years in U.S. custody, told the commission. Espionage involves gathering and transmitting military secrets. That's what the U.S. government wanted to convict them of, but couldn't.

"They were not accused of espionage, but of conspiracy," said Ricardo Alarcón, "because there is no evidence they did anything. Nothing they did endangered U.S. security. Yet the highest possible sentences for the actual crime of espionage were imposed."

The fight to free Gerardo Hernández remains the center of the international defense campaign.

"My husband has served his time and done his duty to his country," said Olga Salanueva, who is married to René González. "But his mission is not finished. All of our missions. They will only be complete when Gerardo is free."

Tacked on eight months after Hernández's arrest, the indictment on conspiracy to murder rests on claims he had advance knowledge of Cuban government plans to shoot down planes flown by the counterrevolutionary outfit Brothers to the Rescue. The planes — shot down by the Cuban Air Force in February 1996 — had engaged in repeated provocations entering Cuban airspace, going so far as to drop leaflets over Havana. Fearing lack of evidence was an obstacle to convicting Hernández, prosecutors asked the charge be withdrawn at the



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

**Some 250 people attended London International Commission of Inquiry into the Case of the Cuban Five (above). Inset, Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernández, one of the Five. Pérez has been repeatedly denied visa to visit him in U.S. jail as "an instrument they try to use against him," she said.**



end of the trial. But the judge refused.

U.S. lawyer Peter Schey cited evidence given at the trial that, based on high-level information from the Cuban government, Brothers to the Rescue was warned many times by U.S. agencies of the possible consequences of its actions. Hernández had only the knowledge that if the flights continued a confrontation was likely. "Who was in a position to stop them?" Schey asked, "not Gerardo Hernández. They had already been warned by the U.S. government. That government could have arrested them for filing false flight plans, which is a felony. That would have stopped them."

The fighting spirit of those defending the Five was reflected in the statements of their relatives. "I know I'm the instrument they try to use against him," said Adriana Pérez, who is married to Gerardo Hernández and has repeatedly been denied a U.S. visa to visit him. "I can't hide moments of sadness, but every day I wake up and say to myself "there is no time for nostalgia or sadness, only to fight for his return."

René's daughter Irmita González compared the lack of human solidarity she noticed among the counterrevolutionaries in Miami to what she had known in Cuba. "I met the people my dad was working with in Miami when I was 12," she said. "There was no love, kindness, honor. It was all about hate and money."

After her father's arrest, González went a year without seeing him. When her baby sister Ivette was first allowed to visit him in jail, she related, her father was chained to his chair. "Is he a dog?" the child asked her mother, Olga Salanueva. "Your father is not the dog in this room," she replied.

The class "justice" the Five have received at the hands of the U.S. authorities strikes a chord with many working people. Lawyers and family alike described the 17 months the Five spent in punishment cells, denial of family visits and barriers put in their way to preparing their defense.

Motions requesting movement of the trial outside Miami, on the grounds that the Five would not get an impartial trial there, were denied. Martin Garbus, lead lawyer for the Five, described prejudicial and untruthful press coverage during the trial, threats to the jury, and recently established evidence that the U.S. government made substantial payments

to journalists who were writing about the case during the trial.

Some 2,000 attending a concert featuring Eliades Ochoa and Omara Portuondo of the Buena Vista Social Club also heard from author Alice Walker and 10 leading British stage and screen actors who read letters, poems and other writings by the Five and their families from the books *Letters of Love and Hope* and *Voices from Prison: The Cuban Five*. Elizabeth Palmeiro, married to Ramón Labañino, told *Radio Rebelde* that many who came for the music "were finding out for the first time about the case of the Five. We were surprised to see how they identified with the cause."

Antonio Guerrero's 15 watercolor paintings depicting the Five's first 17 months in "the hole" were on display at a closing dinner for commission participants held at the Trades Union Congress headquarters. Guerrero had spoken earlier to the commission by phone from prison. The Cuba Solidarity Campaign gives priority to its work with union leaderships; 23 national unions are affiliated to the group.

*I Will Die the Way I've Lived*, Pathfinder's "catalog" of the paintings, was well received, as was the newly published *Voices From Prison* — more than 150 copies of the books were sold during the weekend event. "We're looking at showing the paintings at a central Manchester venue; to tell people about it," Unison North West regional officer Paul Foley told the *Militant*.

The International Commission was one of three international events planned this year by fighters for the freedom of the Five. From June 4-11 the third "5 days for the Cuban 5" will be held in Washington, D.C., and from October 27-29 the Third World Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba will take place in Havana.

"The Five were defending the Cuban Revolution," said Kenia Serrano, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples. "The struggle for the freedom of the Five is a struggle for the freedom and liberation of women and men everywhere. There is a slogan from the anti-apartheid struggle, that there is no easy road to freedom. We will need to fight hard. Let us unite to free the Cuban Five."

For more information on upcoming events see <http://5daysforthecuban5.com> and [www.icap.cu](http://www.icap.cu).

## Showings of paintings by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five

### *I Will Die the Way I've Lived*



## Exhibits

### Los Angeles

#### March 2-30

Coffee and Crepes, 4545 Cesar Chavez Ave. Tel.: (323) 263-4544; (323) 661-1980. Exhibition schedule: Tues.-Thurs., 10AM-4PM; Fri.-Sat., 12PM-8PM.

### Chicago

#### March 21-April 13

Opening reception: Sat., March 22, 7-9PM. Beverly Arts Center, 2407 W. 111th St. Tel.: (773) 445-3838. Exhibition schedule: Mon.-Fri., 9AM-9PM (closes at 5 p.m. if no evening event); Sat., 12PM-5PM.; Sun., 1-4PM.

### Atlanta

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# Demonstrations in Turkey

**Continued from front page**  
been in coma since June 16 last year when he was hit by a gas canister during a police crackdown on protest actions as he was running a family errand to buy bread.

The protests, in which many participants have been waving loaves of bread, take place against the background of a government corruption scandal and economic downturn.

“The biggest demonstrations were on the day of Berkin’s funeral,” said Samil Altan, of the People’s Democratic Party, on the phone from Istanbul March 17. “We were thousands. The police used tear gas and water cannons. The prime minister attacked us and cursed us.”

According to *Hürriyet Daily News*, some 2 million people in 53 provinces across the country took to the streets after Elvan’s death. Cops intervened in 13 provinces, leading to clashes in which at least 52 civilians were injured and more than 400 arrested.

Cops attacked a vigil for Elvan outside the hospital, employing tear gas, despite being very close to the hospital entrance. “It is not Allah who has taken my son away. It is Tayyip Erdogan,” Berkin’s mother Gülsüm Elvan said at the vigil, *Hürriyet* reported.

During the March 12 funeral, some markets stopped selling bread. Members of DISK, a union that organizes metal, textile and service workers, walked off the job to join the procession.

“These are fakers, fakers,” Erdogan said about the protesters at an opening ceremony for a subway line in Ankara March 13. He neither commented on Elvan’s death nor sent condolences to the family. “First they tried with Gezi; they could not succeed,” he said in a televised speech while campaigning prior to the March 30 local elections. “Then they started the Dec. 17 coup attempt and could not succeed. Now they try to reach results by provoking, terrorizing the streets.”

The protest wave last summer started in Istanbul May 31 when police attacked young people occupying Taksim Gezi Park who opposed a government plan to replace it with a shopping mall. The protests soon became mass demonstrations against the Erdogan government, involving more than 2 million people demanding greater democratic and political rights, including for religious and national minorities, women and unions.

Government forces responded with water cannons, tear gas, plastic bullets and assaults, killing nine. More than 8,000 were injured, 104 sustained serious head injuries and 11 lost an eye, mostly from plastic bullets. Erdogan defended the crackdown, slandering the protests as the work of domestic provocateurs and their foreign collaborators.

Erdogan’s condemnation of “the Dec. 17 coup” refers to arrests of more than 50 charged with corruption, apparently driven by bourgeois opposition to the Erdogan government. Among them were politicians with Erdogan’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), pro-AKP capitalists and sons of three cabinet ministers.

Ministers of the economy, interior and urban development resigned Dec. 25 after the arrest of their sons, who allegedly accepted bribes for awarding government building permits and public contracts. The next day Erdogan replaced seven other ministers.

Also arrested was head of the state-

owned Halkbank, who was accused of setting up deals with Iran in violation of U.S.-led international sanctions. An order was put out to arrest Erdogan’s son Bilal on suspicion of paying out bribes, but police refused to do so.

As premier since 2003, Erdogan has led the privatization of large government-owned companies, including in the oil and gas industry, seaports and airports. During his years as prime minister the Turkish economy has grown by up to 9 percent annually. But this “success” rode on a wave of rising debt. Turkey’s trade deficit grew from \$16 billion in 2003 to \$84 billion in 2012. In the first three weeks of unrest last summer, speculators sold off Turkish stocks and bonds worth more than \$1.6 billion.

“There is polarization in the country and a political crisis going into the March 30 elections,” Altan said. “The demonstrations have stopped for now, but the situation is tense.”

## Workers in Egypt fight for national minimum wage

BY BETSY FARLEY

Since December 2013, more than 100,000 workers, including in steel, textile, transport and postal sectors, have gone on strike. Most of these actions have been around unpaid wages and demands that the minimum monthly wage of 1,200 Egyptian pounds (\$170) promised for some public workers be implemented for all.

“We are given promises, so we return to work,” striking bus driver Shokri Seif Mohamed from Cairo said in a Feb. 27 news video from Ahram online, the state news service. “The promises aren’t held so we strike again. We get more promises, we stop the strike, then the promises are broken again.”

“Since the revolution we’ve had six different governments, from all colors of the spectrum,” said Mahmoud, another striker. “But the policies are the same. The powerful loot and the poor get buried!”

Government officials announced Feb. 26 that most public sector workers will not get the minimum monthly wage. Excluded are most of those who have



Reuters/Umit Bektas

**Demonstrators in Ankara, Turkey, March 12 wave loaves of bread after death of 15-year-old Berkin Elvan, who had been in a coma since June after being hit by gas canister in police crackdown on protesters. At that time he was going to store to buy bread for his family.**

recently gone on strike — transport and postal workers, cotton and textile workers, and those in the food industry. In a televised address March 2, newly appointed Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb appealed to the “patriotism” of all Egyptians, saying this is a moment for work, not strikes.

Cairo transport workers suspended their strike through April to give the new government a chance to respond to their demands. Since then transport workers in Alexandria, Egypt’s second largest city, went on strike demanding the minimum wage, unpaid bonuses, and a 200-pound increase.

The recent strike wave began in February with the Mahalla Spinning and Weaving workers, who are demanding unpaid bonuses, the minimum wage and removal of company Chairman Foad Abdel Aleem.

“We have no concrete results yet,” independent textile union leader Kamal Fayoumy told the *Militant* in a phone interview from Mahalla al Kubra March 9. “But the union movement has gained strength and confidence and the Free

Trade Union in Mahalla has grown through these strikes.”

Since the popular mobilizations that overthrew the government of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the capitalist rulers in Egypt have been unable to pacify workers demanding higher wages and political rights. Neither the short-lived Muslim Brotherhood government of President Mohammed Morsi, nor the current military-led interim government have done anything to mitigate the effects of rising prices and high unemployment on working people. Official joblessness is 13 percent and more than 25 percent for young Egyptians. The annual rate of inflation is nearly 12 percent.

“The government changed as a response to the strikes,” Fayoumy said, referring to the resignation of the prime minister and cabinet in February. “But the government change has not resulted in any real change on the ground. Our demands have yet to be met.”

*Georges Mehrabian in Athens, Greece, contributed to this article.*

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



**March 31, 1989**

The Machinists’ strike against Eastern Airlines is having an impact on working people throughout the country. They are inspired by the strikers’ decision to fight for their rights and dignity, and by the unflinching support of the Eastern pilots and flight attendants for the Machinists’ action.

This is giving added momentum to the national march for abortion rights, which will take place in Washington, D.C., April 9.

Part and parcel of the rulers’ offensive has been an attack on democratic rights — from expanding use of the death penalty and mandatory drug testing on the job, to wholesale violations of immigrant workers’ rights and the campaign to overturn women’s right to abortion.

A big turnout for the April 9 march will not only strengthen the struggle to keep abortion legal — it will also aid the Eastern strikers in their fight.



**March 30, 1964**

Behind the newspaper headlines about “Rioting Negroes in Jacksonville, Florida” facts are already discernible which show that the main perpetrators of the violence are the mayor and the police department.

When Negro groups in Jacksonville began a campaign of protest against segregation in hotels and restaurants, the racist mayor went on television to announce his “get tough” campaign. He swore in 500 firemen as special cops to deal with Negro demonstrators.

Clubbings of Negroes and mass arrests began. The students and people of the neighborhood fought back with stones, bottles, etc. forcing police finally to withdraw.

The mayor and the white-supremacists got more than they bargained for. The Negro people today will not take such treatment lying down. They fight back.



**March 31, 1939**

On July 28, 1938 District Court Judge Frank E. Reed of Minneapolis handed down an order requiring that General Drivers Union Local 544 immediately surrender for inspection all its books, records and correspondence to attorneys for five finks who had asked for such an inspection, in order the better to prepare a case against the union.

It is a sad fact that, in the case of most unions, such a union-busting order of a judge would have been obeyed, and the finks, obviously agents of the Associated Industries, would have had their way.

But this was the famous Minneapolis Truckdrivers Union, veteran of the great strikes of 1934 which unionized the whole city. Instead of surrendering its books, the union issued a public denunciation of the judge, meaning the union would not turn its books over to the finks.



# Russian Revolution fought old attitudes towards women

*Below is an excerpt from Women and the Family by Leon Trotsky, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. In this collection of writings and speeches between 1923 and 1936, Trotsky examines the role of women in society and the role of the family, including both the gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the problems that continued to plague women after the revolution. This piece is from his speech "The Protection of Motherhood and the Struggle for Culture" given at the Third All-Union Conference on Protection of Mothers and Children on Dec. 7, 1925. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

What is our old culture in the area of the family and everyday life? On top was the nobility, who put the stamp of vulgarity, on a basis of darkness and lack of culture, on all social life. And if our proletariat, which emerged from the peasantry, caught up in a single leap with the European proletariat in some thirty to fifty years and then overtook it in the fields of class struggle and revolutionary politics, there is still, in the proletariat too, more than a little of the foul old leftovers of serfdom in the field of personal morals, the family, and everyday life. And in the intellectual or petty-bourgeois family, you can still find as



March by women during revolutionary struggle in Russia 1917. In 1925 speech Trotsky explains need to combat prejudices against women and family laid down over millenia.

much as you like of genuine present-day serfdom. You should not set yourself the utopian task of overturning the old family by some kind of instant juridical leap — you'll fall on your face and compromise yourself in front of the peasantry — but within the material possibilities, within the already assured conditions of social development, act, along the legal line too, so as to direct the family toward the future. ...

We Marxists say that the value of a social structure is determined by the development of productive forces. This is indisputable. But it is also possible to approach the problem from the other end. The development of the productive forces is not needed for its own sake. In the last analysis the development of the productive forces is needed because it provides the basis for a new human personality, conscious, without a lord over him on earth, not fearing imaginary lords, born of fear, in the sky — a human personality which absorbs into itself all the best of what was created by the thought and creativity of past ages, which in solidarity with all others goes forward, creates new cultural values, constructs new personal and family attitudes, higher and nobler than those which were born on the basis of class slavery. The development of the productive forces is dear

to us, as the material presupposition of a higher human personality, not shut up in itself, but cooperative, associative.

From this point of view it may be said that probably for many decades to come it will be possible to evaluate a human society by the attitude it has toward woman, toward the mother and toward the child — and this is true not only for evaluating society, but also the individual person. The human psyche does not develop evenly in all its parts. We are living in a political age, a revolutionary age, when working men and women are developing themselves in a struggle, forming themselves above all in a revolutionary political way. And those cells of consciousness where family views and traditions reside, and the attitude of one man to another, to woman, to child, and so on — these cells often remain in the old form. The revolution has not yet worked upon them. The cells in the brain in which political and social views reside are being worked upon in our time much more quickly and sharply, thanks to the whole structure of society and thanks to the epoch in which we are living. (Of course, this is only an analogy — in the brain the process works differently.) And therefore we shall go on for a long time observing that we are constructing a new

industry, a new society, but in the field of personal relations much still remains from the Middle Ages. And therefore one of the criteria for the evaluation of our culture, and a standard for individual proletarian working men and women and progressive peasants, is the attitude toward woman and the attitude toward the child.

Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin] taught us to value the working-class parties according to their attitude, in particular and in general, toward the oppressed nations, toward the colonies. Why? Because if you take, say, the English worker, it is much easier to arouse in him the feeling of solidarity with his whole class — he will take part in strikes and will even arrive at revolution — but to make him raise himself to solidarity with a yellow-skinned Chinese coolie, to treat him as a brother in exploitation, will prove much more difficult, since here it is necessary to break through a shell of national arrogance which has been built up over centuries.

And just so, comrades, has the shell of family prejudices, in the attitudes of the head of the family toward woman and child — and woman is the coolie of the family — this shell has been laid down over millenia, and not centuries. And thus you are — you must be — the moral battering ram which will break through this shell of conservatism, women and the family rooted in our old Asiatic nature, in slavery, in serfdom, in bourgeois prejudices, and in the prejudices of the workers themselves, which have arisen from the worst aspects of peasant traditions. Inasmuch as you will be destroying this shell, like a battering ram in the hands of the socialist society that is being built, every conscious revolutionary, every Communist, every progressive worker and peasant is obliged to support you with all his might. I wish you great success, comrades, and above all I wish you more attention from our public opinion. Your work, which is really purifying, really salutary, must be placed in the center of attention of our press, so that it can be supported on the shoulders of all progressive elements in the country, and you can be helped to reach successes in the reconstruction of our way of life and culture. [Loud applause.]

March

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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# Quebec gov't probe targets construction workers' unions

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ  
AND JOHN STEELE

MONTREAL — Over the past six months, a three-year-running government corruption probe has targeted the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) and the affiliated FTQ-Construction union with slanders of links to organized crime, thug violence and the illegal drug trade.

The Commission of Inquiry on the Awarding and Management of Public Contracts in the Construction Industry was set up by the Quebec provincial government in October 2011 with the stated aim of investigating corruption in the awarding of government construction contracts. Chaired by Superior Court Justice France Charbonneau, the commission is commonly referred to as the Charbonneau Commission.

The Quebec Federation of Labor is the largest union federation in Quebec, with 600,000 members. FTQ-Construction represents 70,000 workers, including thousands of construction workers in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector.

The probe by the commission into the internal affairs of the FTQ follows years of police wiretapping labor officials' phone calls — none of which have led to criminal charges — and attacks by successive governments to weaken the union.

Quebec had been the last jurisdiction in North America where bosses on all major construction sites were required to hire only union labor. But in September 2013, anti-union legislation went into effect eliminating “union placement” of workers on construction sites, a gain won in labor battles of earlier decades. This protection gave the union more power to enforce contract terms on working conditions, wages and job safety. The bosses now hire through the Quebec Construction Commission, a government agency.

The Parti Quebecois government gave the Charbonneau Commission an

extended mandate to submit its final report by April 2015. So far the commission's findings — based on three years of testimony from politicians, government functionaries and construction bosses — have resulted in the resignation of Montreal mayors Gerald Tremblay and Michael Applebaum and Laval Mayor Gilles Vaillancourt. Applebaum was arrested last June and charged with fraud, conspiracy and corruption over real estate transactions.

Since the fall of 2013, six former and current union officials have been subpoenaed to face televised interrogations.

During the testimony of former FTQ President Michel Arsenault in February, the commission played police wiretap tapes of personal phone calls from 2009 in which he commented favorably on a vacation he had taken on the yacht of a construction magnate whom the police allege may be connected with the mafia. Arsenault resigned as FTQ president last November after witnesses testified that he knew of links between some union leaders and illicit business ventures, but did nothing about it.

On Feb. 25, Bernard Gauthier, representative of Heavy Machine Operators Local 791, an affiliate of the FTQ that represents some 600 workers in northern Quebec, was hauled before the commission. He explained his efforts to ensure bosses hired union members and adhered to contract terms. Charbonneau and commission lawyers sought to paint Gauthier as a thug, responsible for assaults on other workers and bosses. Charbonneau condemned Gauthier's refusal to accept the government's abolition of union placement and campaign against “aggressive unionism.”

Gauthier was greeted by 60 construction workers at the airport upon his return to northern Quebec following the two-day televised testimony.

In mid-February contract negotiations began between union officials and the Quebec Construction Association, which represents construction bosses in



Jeannot Lévesque

**Striking construction workers march in Jonquière, Quebec, June 20. Government corruption probe of construction industry is being used to slander and go after rights of unions.**

Quebec. Last July, the provincial government used anti-union legislation to force the 77,000 strikers back to work after a week-and-a-half-long strike that paralyzed major construction projects across the province. At the outset, the strike involved 175,000 workers and included workers in the residential and civil engineering sectors. But workers in those sectors reached contract agreements before the government's back-to-work decree, which banned the industrial sector from striking for a year.

If no agreement is reached on the

main issues, including Saturday double-time pay, work hours, wages and the hiring of local workers, the industrial sector workers can legally strike after June 30.

In the context of a snap April 7 election called by the provincial government, the FTQ leadership is calling on its members to support any candidate that backs the union's platform, which includes repeal of the 2013 legislation that eliminated union placement and put hiring in the hands of a government agency.

## Protesters in London demand Russian troops out of Crimea

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON — Chanting “Russian troops, leave Crimea!” several thousand protesters, most of Ukrainian origin, marched from Marble Arch in the city center here to the Russian Embassy March 16. Some came on buses from Nottingham, Birmingham, Manchester and other cities.

Among the scores of Ukrainian flags were those of other nations historically dominated by Russia, including Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic, Moldova, Georgia and Chechnya. A substantial number of Russians also participated.

“The Russian people are not our enemies,” protest organizer Bohdan Ciapryna, a leader of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain, told the crowd, pointing to the protests against the Russian invasion of Crimea across Russia the previous day.

The protests in Ukraine and London began in November as pro-EU demonstrations, Ciapryna said. “But as they went on, we started protesting against government corruption. When the government started killing demonstrators, it turned into a struggle for democracy and freedom. We've gotten rid of a dictator who shot his own people and then fled to Russia, but now we face an even bigger enemy — the Russian regime.”

Melek Maksudoglu described the long history of repression of her people, the Crimean Tatars. “Ukrainians and Tatars have lived together peacefully for hundreds of years. We are united against the Russian occupation,” she said.

One speaker was part of a group of about 50 young Venezuelans backing the pro-imperialist demonstrations against the government of Nicolas Maduro in that country. Among their slogans was the reactionary call for “Cuba out of Venezuela,” which they equate with the Ukrainians' fight against the Russian invasion of their country.

“We want freedom from Russia to choose our own president,” Roman Popovych, who has lived in London for 14 years and works as a window cleaner, told the *Militant*. “Not a president for the rich, but for the poor. The rich will always look after themselves.”

Roman Kryvko, a construction worker who has lived for one year in London, pointed out that Ukrainians can't come to work and study in the United Kingdom as can those from EU member countries. “We want to have a better life like everyone else,” he said.

Participants bought three subscriptions and 57 single copies of the *Militant*.

## Truck drivers' strike shut down Vancouver port

Continued from front page

unanimously voted to strike. They reinforced pickets set up by the non-union truckers at a number of locations in and around Vancouver, including four separate port terminals and nearly a dozen trucking companies.

“We want to keep the nonunion guys

involved in this fight,” a driver who has worked at the port for seven years, who didn't want his name used, told the *Militant*. “We'd like to see them in the union.”

Owner-operator Jaspal Kang, a non-union trucker, said some trucking companies are paying as little as \$50 per container to new drivers. They are un-

dercutting the rate of \$100 to \$185 won by truckers in 2005 after they refused to move containers for 47 days.

Truckers say they are caught between rising fuel, insurance and maintenance costs on the one hand and pay rate cuts on the other.

In the opening days of the strike more than 40 nonunion workers had their port trucking licenses suspended for alleged picket line violence.

“We are standing with those guys,” said Kang, stressing that truckers are determined not to return to work without their reinstatement. He insisted the truckers had done nothing wrong.

A return to work agreement was drafted by a federal Transportation Ministry-appointed mediator. Leaders of the two truckers' organizations recommended strikers approve the agreement. But it was soundly rejected in separate votes March 8, by 100 percent of the nonunion truckers in the UTA and 98 percent of those unionized.

On March 17, Port Metro Vancouver issued an ultimatum to the striking truckers, threatening to revoke their port permits.



Members of United Truckers Association rally Feb. 26 along Highway 99 in Delta, British Columbia, on opening day of strike for higher wages, against unpaid wait times and long hours.



# GM bosses' refusal to fix known defects kills 100s

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

How much is the protection of human life worth to the U.S. auto barons?

According to a recent report, hundreds of people died in crashes of General Motors-made cars as a result of defective ignition switches and likely related air-bag failures. The company was aware of the ignition problem for a decade, but only issued a recall last month in face of mounting pressure. Fixing the problem costs as little as \$1 per car, according to NBC News.

Ignition switches in these vehicles if bumped or weighed down by a heavy key chain would shut off the engine and power system while the car was in motion. GM in February recalled 1.6 million cars worldwide from six models produced in 2003-2007.

The company disclosed in papers filed with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that it knew of the ignition defect as far back as 2001. The NHTSA, however, never opened an investigation nor took steps to force GM to recall the cars. GM officials have conceded that a dozen people were killed as a result of the faulty ignition.

Among those not included in GM's count is Brooke Melton, 29, who was killed four years ago when her 2005 Chevy Cobalt careened out of control after the ignition shut off, colliding with another vehicle. The family's attorney Lance Cooper "asked witness Gary Altman, who was GM's program engineering manager for the Cobalt in 2004 and 2005, if it was true that the car company 'made a business decision not to fix this problem and five months later sold [Brooke Melton] a vehicle with the problem,'" reported NBC News. "That is what happened, yes," Altman answered.

"In 2005, company engineers proposed that GM keys be altered to make the opening for the key ring smaller and reduce jostling of the key," reported NBC News. "Instead of changing the keys, however, GM designed an insert that could be added to the keys. It then sent a bulletin to dealership service managers that said the insert could be provided to car owners who came in and complained about ignition shutoffs." Fewer than 500 drivers did, according to GM warranty records.

According to a recent report on air-bag failures from 2003 to 2012 by Friedman

Research Corp., which reviews vehicle design and safety, 303 passengers were killed when air bags failed to open in two of the GM models just recalled — 2005-07 Chevrolet Cobalts and 2003-07 Saturn Ions.

The judge who approved GM's bankruptcy filing in June 2009 absolved the "new" GM of legal responsibility for incidents that occurred before then.

"It is true that new GM did not assume liability for claims arising from incidents or accidents occurring prior to July 2009," said a GM statement. "Our principle through this process has been to put the customer first, and that will continue to guide us."

In another development, GM recalled 1.5 million other vehicles over faulty air-bag system wiring March 17. The recall affects sport utilities that go as far back as 2008. Cadillac XTS, 2013 and 2014, were also recalled for shorts in brake booster-pumps that can cause fires.

## March in Toronto backs Ukrainian sovereignty



Militant/John Steele

TORONTO, March 16 — About 1,000 people marched to the Russian Consulate here to support the struggle of the Ukrainian people against Russian domination and demand withdrawal of Russian troops from Crimea. Chants included, "Russians rise up against Putin" and "Referendum fake."

"I have friends in Kiev who are Russian speakers, and there is no animosity between Russians and Ukrainians," Waterloo university student Yuriy Palamarchuk told the *Militant*. "If you stay quiet nothing will happen," said Slavko Stefanisin, a Ukrainian born in Bosnia who worked for 17 years as a long-haul truck driver.

— JOANNE HOLOWCHAK AND JOHN STEELE

## Capitalist neglect results in explosion, killing 8

Continued from front page

main caused a massive explosion that killed eight people, injured more than 50 and left 100 homeless.

At 9:13 a.m. on March 12, East Harlem resident Corey Louire called energy company Consolidated Edison and reported that he could smell a heavy odor of gas. Less than 20 minutes later an explosion took down two five-story buildings and blew out windows in the surrounding area, sending debris into the streets and on the tracks of an elevated Metro-North rail line nearby. Residents in 91 apartments in surrounding buildings were evacuated.

Residents told the *New York Daily News* March 13 that they had complained about strong gas odor in the buildings and made calls to a city hotline to report it, but couldn't get through. One tenant said she called the night before the blast when the smell was particularly strong and again on the morning of the blast. The media has sought to foist the blame on residents for not taking proper steps to inform the authorities.

"It's like they think we should be living our lives walking around smelling for gas all the time," Lenore Garbine, a nurse, told the *Militant* March 16 outside an Associated grocery store half a block from the collapsed buildings. "I'm really angry. It's a scandal. People dead and hurt and it's totally unnecessary. There

was no way for people to know or to prepare, like a burst out of the blue."

Four days after the blast the surrounding blocks were sealed off by cops. They allow shoppers to go to the grocery store on condition they don't go farther up the street and come back out the same way.

"Look at that rail line, it's just next to the buildings," said Adrian Harris, a transit worker, pointing to the elevated track half a block up. "What if a train had passed when the explosion took place? It could have derailed and fallen down. It must be one of the busiest rail lines in the state."

The *New York Times* reported that a southbound Metro-North train had just passed the explosion site and according to passengers "shook violently."

This area in Manhattan is also called Spanish Harlem and traditionally home to many of Latin American descent. Emelie and Reinaldo Ortiz came from Mexico more than 20 years ago and have lived here for 13 years. They talked about the blast while doing their laundry just up the street from the Associated grocery store.

"We weren't home when it happened," said Reinaldo, a sanitation worker. "We didn't smell any gas, so I can't say I walked around waiting for it to happen. But the more you think about it, the less surprising it is. You see the potholes in the streets, you see

the cracks in buildings, you see there is no maintenance to public housing. So why would it be any different with the gas and the electric?"

"I worry, it's like living on top of a bomb," said Emelie Ortiz, who works in home care. "But we don't have enough money to move anywhere better."

The main pipe running into the East Harlem buildings dates back to 1887 and is partly made of cast iron. According to data from the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, serious leaks are four times more frequent in cast iron pipes than pipes made of other material.

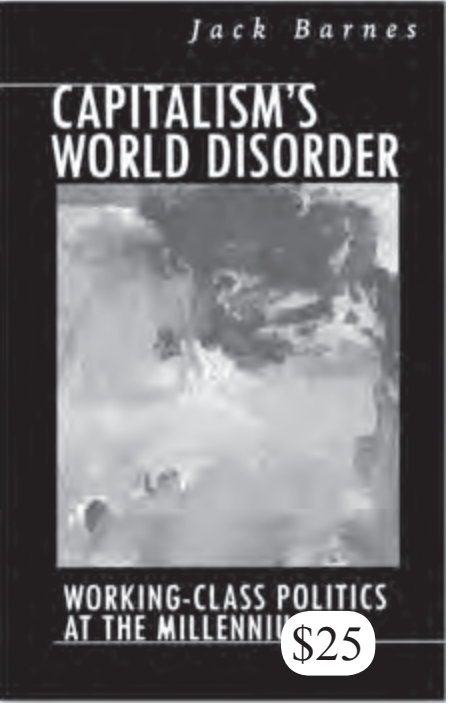
Cast iron pipes are especially common in old, large cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington, D.C. In New York two companies, National Grid and Con Ed, oversee the gas mains across the five boroughs. Fifty percent of National Grid's gas lines and 60 percent of Con Ed's are made of cast iron and unprotected steel, another leak-prone material.

Con Ed plans to phase out cast-iron pipes in New York over the next 35 years. A report from federal safety representatives estimates work to phase out cast-iron pipes will be done in Connecticut around 2080, in New York state by 2090 and in Pennsylvania by 2111.

The deadly blast is the latest major consequences of decades of neglect of infrastructure in housing, communications, schools, health and recreation.

According to "Caution Ahead," a March report from Center for an Urban Future, infrastructure across New York needs to be replaced or repaired at an estimated cost of \$47.3 billion in the coming four to five years.

According to the report, 11 percent of the city's bridges are structurally deficient; city roads outlive their useful life by 20 percent before they are resurfaced or reconstructed; more than 25 percent of the subway mainline signals have exceeded their 50-year life span; and 1,500 of New York City Housing Authority's 2,600 buildings do not comply with Local Law 11 standard for exterior and façade conditions.



Reuters/Brendan McDermid

East Harlem neighborhood of New York where leak in 127-year-old gas main caused massive explosion March 12, taking down two buildings, killing eight people and injuring more than 50.



# Havana book fair: ‘History of class struggle in US is vital for revolutionaries worldwide’

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL  
AND GERARDO SÁNCHEZ

HAVANA — “Everyone in Cuba has had some experience in confrontations with U.S. imperialism — whether we’re in our 60s, 40s, or 20s,” said Gen. Luis “Lucio” Martínez Menocal, speaking here during a Feb. 17 book launch at the Havana International Book Fair.

“The two books we’re presenting today are tools to learn about the continuity of these confrontations, which are the product of the class struggle.” Knowledge of the history of the class struggle in the United States, he said, “is vital for revolutionaries” in Cuba.

Martínez, a retired general of the Ministry of the Interior, was part of a panel discussing new Spanish-language editions of *Fifty Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington’s Political Police and the American Working Class* by Larry Seigle, Farrell Dobbs and Steve Clark, and *Socialism on Trial* by James P. Cannon. New editions of the books in both Spanish and English will be released by Pathfinder Press in May.

The audience of 60 spanned several generations. Some, like Martínez, were revolutionary combatants from the struggle in the 1950s led by Fidel Castro that overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. But Martínez was especially addressing two dozen young cadets from the Interior Ministry’s national academy. The director of the school had heard about the event from Martínez and jumped at the chance for students to participate and learn.

The other speakers were Elier Ramírez, a historian who works at Cuba’s Council of State, and Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder’s president and member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. Chairing was Rodolfo Zamora, assistant director of the Cuban publisher



Militant photos by Jonathan Silberman

Washington brands Cubans and other revolutionaries as “terrorists to rationalize using anti-terrorist laws to enforce the interests of the minority ruling class,” said Cuban Gen. Luis Martínez at Havana book fair panel Feb. 17. **Above**, from left, Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder Press president; Martínez; moderator Rodolfo Zamora; and Elier Ramírez, Cuban Council of State historian. **Inset**, audience.

Ciencias Sociales, which helped organize the event.

## Learned about U.S. class struggle

Ramírez said he had learned a lot from the books. He said he had discovered that the intensified “war waged by the FBI and other government agencies against the democratic rights of U.S. citizens goes back to the eve of World War II, not to the rise of McCarthyism in the 1950s, as some authors maintain.”

*Fifty Years of Covert Operations in the US*, he said, explains “how the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration took advantage of World War II and the fight against fascism to unleash the FBI” against unions, Black rights organizations, Japanese-Americans, Puerto Rican independence fighters, and others.

Among those targeted, Ramírez said, were 18 leaders of the Minneapolis and Midwest Teamsters union battles of the 1930s and of the Socialist Workers Party, who were tried and imprisoned on trumped-up conspiracy charges under the Smith Act, “the ‘Gag Law’ enacted by President Roosevelt in 1940 with the aim of silencing the labor vanguard in the workers movement that opposed U.S. entry into World War II.” *Socialism on Trial* is the testimony by SWP National Secretary James P. Cannon, one of those 18.

During that time, Ramírez said, “the U.S. Communist Party echoed the government’s argument that ‘national unity’ was essential to confront the advance of fascism.” It backed Washington’s assaults on working-class resistance, including the frame-up of the Minneapolis defendants under the Smith Act — the same law that was later used to convicted leaders of the CP in 1949. The CP was following the line dictated by Moscow, “an illness that also afflicted other Communist parties in Latin America after the death of Lenin and the rise of Stalin to power in the Soviet Union,” said Ramírez.

Today these books are useful for those fighting to free the Cuban revolutionaries imprisoned in the U.S., Ramírez emphasized. “The case of the Cuban Five, like the 1941 Minneapolis trial, was a

frame-up by the U.S. government with a leading role by the FBI,” he said.

The 1986 victory in the SWP lawsuit against government spying and disruption, outlined in *Fifty Years of Covert Operations in the U.S.*, “was only possible through a major political mobilization. The Five are political prisoners, and while the legal battle is indispensable, what will get our heroes out of prison will be the political campaign that is waged.”

## Lessons fighting gov’t frame-ups

Luis Martínez pointed out that Washington today falsely brands Cubans and other revolutionaries as “terrorists.” It does so, he said, to rationalize using “their anti-terrorist laws to enforce the interests of the minority ruling class.”

In that regard, he said, he found it useful to learn in *Socialism on Trial* how communists in the U.S. have defended themselves in court against such false charges. He pointed to Cannon’s answer to federal prosecutors’ claim that the SWP “advocated violence.”

To the contrary, Cannon replied, violence has always been initiated, not by working people seeking to establish a new social and economic order, but by “the outlived class that doesn’t want to leave the stage” and wants “to hang on to their privileges” during revolutionary working-class upsurges.

These two new books “are not about the past,” said Mary-Alice Waters.

“They are tools that help us to understand what is happening today and prepare us for battles ahead.”

In fact, Waters said, together with *Voices From Prison: The Cuban Five*, they are part of a trilogy of books that Pathfinder presented at the book fair.

“Why a trilogy?” Because all three “are about the same truth”—that neither “the capitalist ‘justice’ meted out to the Cuban Five over three U.S. administrations ... nor the exemplary way the five revolutionaries have acted in face of it, are something new for the workers movement in the U.S. and around the world.” The books show that “the courtroom is not where innocence and guilt are decided. It is not where justice will be found.”

At the same time, Waters said, the books “are about the way revolutionary fighters and communists go to prison. How we prepare ourselves for something that is not unusual in the life of any working-class fighter — of anyone who believes there is something important enough to go to jail for.”

Everything the Five have done since their arrests and frame-up in 1998, Waters said, “is in the finest tradition of revolutionary working-class fighters over more than a century and a half of struggle — the pride and dignity with which they defended their revolutionary principles and rebutted the charges fabricated by U.S. authorities, their refusal to cop a plea, their insistence before the court that they would take the same course again if it would save even a single life in Cuba.”

That kind of proletarian integrity and conduct over decades in face of U.S. imperialism’s “national security” apparatus and political police, Waters said, is also what *Socialism on Trial* and *Fifty Years of Covert Operations in the US* are all about.

The victory in the SWP lawsuit nearly 30 years ago, Waters said, remains a tool “that helps keep open political space for working people to speak, organize and act outside the electoral and judicial arenas — to fight on our own terrain, in the factories, on the picket lines and in the streets.”

At the book fair and other presentations, many Cubans who bought the two books commented that they knew relatively little about the history of the class struggle and communist workers movement in the U.S. And they were eager to learn more.



“War waged by FBI against democratic rights goes back to eve of World War II, not to rise of McCarthyism,” said Elier Ramírez, historian at Cuba’s Council of State. **Above**, Meeting in New York 1943 against frame-up of Teamsters and Socialist Workers Party leaders.

## Socialism on Trial



By James P. Cannon, lead defendant in the Minneapolis sedition trial of 18 leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the labor movement in 1941. In his court testimony, Cannon presents the communist program of the fighting vanguard of the working class. **\$16**

## 50 Years of Covert Operations in the US

Explains the origin of the “national security” state in the US, the expansion of presidential powers and the fight by socialist workers against government spying and harassment. **\$10**



**pathfinderpress.com**



# Moscow moves to seize Ukraine after sham vote

BY SETH GALINSKY

Moscow moved rapidly to annex the Crimean Peninsula after pushing through a rigged referendum there March 16. Russian soldiers and local thugs seized the headquarters of the Ukrainian Navy in Sevastopol and arrested its commander March 19.

Two days after the referendum Russian soldiers in ski masks took over a car dealership that belongs to a Ukrainian businessman who backs the government in Kiev.

Crimea has officially been part of Ukraine for six decades. Its geography, economy, and everyday life remains intertwined with Ukraine. The only way to reach Crimea from Russia is by ferry boat or plane — the only roads are from Ukraine. The Crimean Peninsula gets 85 percent of its water and 82 percent of its electricity from the mainland.

Russian troops invaded Crimea a little more than two weeks ago, occupying its airports, surrounding Ukrainian military bases and imposing a new pro-Moscow prime minister on the province. The Russian government falsely claimed ethnic Russians there were in danger after the overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich by hundreds of thousands, who it slandered as “nationalists, fascists, anti-Semites and Russophobes.”

About 12 percent of the population of Crimea are Tatars, 25 percent Ukrainians and 58 percent ethnic Russians. First the czars, then Joseph Stalin — after he reversed the policy of the Bolsheviks under the leadership of V.I. Lenin to advance the national rights of Ukrainians and other oppressed people — encouraged Russians to move there to maintain Russian domination of the region.

During World War II, Stalin exiled the entire Tatar population of Crimea. Nearly half of them died during the journey. After Stalin’s death they began returning to Crimea and in even greater numbers after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Today many live in neighborhoods without cooking gas, running water or paved roads.

Successive governments in Kiev have turned a deaf ear to Tatar demands for recognition of their rights, sufficient aid to compensate them for their forced deportation and a greater voice in the Crimean parliament.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sought to take advantage of anti-Tatar discrimination by offering to give their language official status in a Russian Crimea and guarantee them 20 percent of posts in government bodies, according to the *Ukrainian Week*.

But Tatar organizations held roadside demonstrations urging Crimeans to boycott the fraudulent vote, holding

signs that said, “Crimea is Ukraine.” Tatars also organized neighborhood defense groups to prevent provocations by pro-Moscow thugs.

Supporters of Russian domination hung posters around Sevastopol saying that joining Russia would bring higher wages and pensions, cheaper gas and more jobs. At the same time, armored personnel carriers and military convoys rumbled down streets across the region.

There were only two choices on the ballot: for immediate separation from Ukraine and integration into Russia; or for greater autonomy from Ukraine and possible integration into Russia at a later time. The ballot boxes were made of clear plastic, making it easy to see how each person voted.

Moscow’s show of military force shored up its support among a layer of ethnic Russians who long for a return to open Russian domination.

“I am Russian and my husband is Tatar. We never had a single problem with anyone,” Tatiana Zhritov, whose husband is a car mechanic, told the *Washington Post*. “Now Russia is trying to divide us, and it is a terrible crime.”

Crimean officials announced that 96.77 percent of ballots backed joining the Russian Federation and claimed there was a 79 percent voter turnout.

Washington and its imperialist allies in the European Union responded by imposing sanctions on a few dozen Rus-

## Working people at center of struggle in Ukraine

**Continued from front page**

talked with dozens of workers and others at various tents set up in the Maidan, many of which are organized by region.

Alexei, who is staying in the tent of protesters from Sevastopol, Crimea, said that some opponents of the Russian occupation there have fled the region.

Alexei, who didn’t give his last name for fear of reprisals against others in Crimea, showed a copy of an affidavit from a Crimean resident named Igor who said he was interrogated, threatened and forced to leave his home by self-described members of the “Russian Bloc” because of his support for the Maidan protests.

“The fight against Yanukovich united people from different regions — it was a real national battle for our country,” said Mykola Bondar, who has been at the Maidan since November, when they began organizing self-defense units to protect the few hundred mostly students who were protesting moves by the Yanukovich government to keep Ukraine under Russian domination.

Over the next three months demon-

### Moscow rally protests Russian occupation of Crimea



Reuters/Maxim Shemetov

Tens of thousands marched through Moscow March 15 to protest the Russian military occupation of Crimea and threats against Ukraine. Protesters held up banners that said, “For your freedom and ours.”

“This is to show Ukrainian citizens our solidarity, so they will see there is another Russia,” Maria Lobanova told the *Washington Post*.

Demonstrators waved Ukrainian and Russian flags and chanted, “Putin is afraid of the Maidan” and “Putin, go away.”

“Don’t believe it when they say that we are few, that we are weak,” Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, a member of Pussy Riot, told the crowd. “Together we will change this country.”

A smaller demonstration backing the Russian invasion took place the same day, by men wearing identical red jackets, marching military style.

“It’s not just that Crimea should join Russia — we should restore the whole Soviet Union, and I think this is what Putin wants,” Sergei Prokopenko told the *New York Times*.

— SETH GALINSKY

sian officials, mostly visa restrictions and asset freezes.

Earlier in the month the EU announced it would provide \$15 billion in loans to Ukraine, which is in a deep

economic crisis. Washington chimed in with \$1 billion in loan guarantees. According to Reuters, the so-called aid package is contingent on Ukraine agreeing to “some harsh economic medicine.”

strations grew and spread as more than 1 million workers, farmers and others joined mobilizations in Kiev and across the country.

The protests reached a climax Feb. 18-20, when Yanukovich ordered the Berkut riot police to drive protesters out of the Madien, killing more than 100. The attack failed, the riot police melted away and Yanukovich fled to Russia Feb. 22. A veteran of the Soviet military campaign during the 1979-89 war in Afghanistan, Bondar helped train the self-defense units. “We had problems with provocations from some groups,” said Bondar. “Svoboda, for example, tore down the Lenin statue in the square to get publicity for their party.”

Svoboda, a rightist party with a military wing and a reputation for strong-arm tactics, attempted other provocations, Bondar said, including driving cars at police lines. Smashing statues of Lenin has given a handle to Moscow’s media campaign to smear demonstrators as “fascists” and created obstacles to uniting workers from west to east against Russian domination.

“The Trade Unions House was the military headquarters, the location of our food stocks and the hospital on the square,” Bondar said. “We would put the word out about what supplies we needed and people from everywhere brought them.” The Berkut set fire to the building in the midst of the February battles.

### Union members join Maidan protests

Vasyl Andreyev, chair of the Ukraine Building Workers’ Union, said in a Feb. 25 interview published on the Building and Wood Worker’s International website that although his union did not officially back the movement to oust Yanukovich, “many members

decided to go to the barricades.”

“The new politicians keep trying to get us to shut down the Maidan,” Bondar said.

“We have to keep this going,” added Konstantyn Samoylenko. “There are very few politicians who are not touched by the oligarchs, the millionaires. Those who own the banks think the economic crisis in Ukraine has to be covered by the workers and the poor people.”

Ukraine has been hard hit by the worldwide capitalist economic crisis. Acting President Oleksandr Tyrchynov says that the country is “heading into the abyss,” with more than \$13 billion in loan payments, mostly to European banks, due this year.

Antoliavych said Black Lung disease is prevalent among miners in the Donetsk region, whose working and living conditions have gotten worse in recent decades. While the independent miners’ union was part of the fight for Ukrainian independence in the 1980s and ’90s, before the fall of the Soviet Union, he said, union officials today do little to protect miners.

The only source of news in the eastern mining areas is Russian television, which is full of lies about Maidan, Antoliavych said. Coal bosses tried to prevent miners from joining the Kiev protests by offering overtime bonuses to stay and work.

“I hope that these events and the Maidan will help change the consciousness of the workers, get them more involved,” said Anya Tchaikovska, who used to work in a bus and construction equipment depot and has been volunteering for the last four months to help coordinate food supplies. “If workers’ demands are not met, there will have to be another Maidan,” she said.

### Contribute to ‘Militant’ reporting team in Ukraine

As Moscow moves with troops to rip Crimea from Ukraine and maintain Russian domination of the country, a team of worker-correspondents from the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom are on the scene to report on the conditions of life and range of views among workers, farmers, youth and others — and to talk with them about workers’ struggles and efforts to build proletarian parties in the countries they are from. They will be traveling to different parts of the Ukraine, speaking to people of various national backgrounds and solidarizing with the fight to defend Ukrainian sovereignty. Their first eyewitness report appears in this issue.

Help defray the substantial costs of this unique coverage. Send a check or money order to: The *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.